Application No. 09/842,370
Filed: April 25, 2001
TC Art Unit: 2172
Confirmation No.: 6576

REMARKS

The Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the application, as amended. All objections and rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claims 1-33 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-3, 11, 15-22 and 30 are rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Lambson et al. Claims 4-10, 12-14; 23-29, and 31-33 are rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being obvious in light of Lambson et al.

Claims 1, 16, and 22 are independent claims, and for each of these independent claims the Examiner relies upon Lambson to provide an explicit teaching of each and every element in these claims. In particular, the Examiner states that Lambson, on pages 2-3, teaches a central reticle database that is configured and arranged to store data associated with each of the plurality of reticles. The Applicant respectfully suggests that the Examiner is mistaken in the interpretation of the reference.

The Applicant respectfully submits that Lambson only teaches the use of a stocker database in which some data is stored for the particular reticles stored at that particular stocker. Lambson states:

"Reticle stockers should have accurate databases of the reticles stored within them. When a reticle is

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ordered for a stepper, the database is queried before confirming or denying the request. To ensure the integrity of the stocker databases, the reticle stockers are equipped with an optional barcode reader. Each time a reticle is placed into the stocker, either from the manual I/O port or from the AeroTrak automation port, the reticle is presented to the barcode reader before being stored. Each reticle barcode contains a checksum character at the end of the string to ensure that misreads are not stored in the database. Thus, the barcode system ensures that the reticle stocker always maintains an accurate database of its contents. That database, in turn, protects against lost or misdirected reticles."

Lambson, pages 2-3, emphasis added.

It is clear that Lambson is referring to the stocker database and not the central reticle database in the section quoted above. For example, the use of the bar code readers ensures that data is stored within the database that corresponds to the reticles within a particular stocker. Before confirming a move request from a stocker, the stocker databases is queried about the reticles currently stored within the particular stocker to make sure that the desired reticle is there. Thus, there is no explicit teaching of central reticle database.

Claim 1 and 16 have been amended to more clearly point out that the central reticle database is a separate entity form the stocker database claimed in claim 1 and described in Lambson. In particular, claims 1 and 16 have been amended to recite in part:

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"[t]he reticle management controller coupled to the stocker controller, the reticle management controller configured and arranged to retrieve at least a portion of the data stored within the central reticle database corresponding to each of the at least one reticles stored within the plurality of storage locations and to provide the retrieved data to the stocker controller, wherein the stocker controller stores the retrieved data within the stocker database." Thus, independent claims 1 and 16 distinctly claim a separate relationship between the central reticle database and the stocker database. In particular, the data stored in the central reticle database is selected and retrieved by the reticle management system and provided to the stocker controller for storage within the stocker database. Thus, although the Lambson references does indeed teach the stocker database system, it does not teach or suggest the use of a central database for storing data corresponding to reticles stored at different stockers.

Claim 22, which is also an independent claim, explicitly claims a central reticle database that stores data corresponding to the one or more reticles within the system, and where the reticles are not stored at a particular stocker. Thus, the central reticle database plays the same role as in claims 1 and 16, i.e., the storage of data corresponding to most or all of the

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reticles in the system and not just a reticle at a particular

stocker.

For the reasons stated above, the Applicant respectfully

requests the reconsideration and allowance of claims 1, 16, and

20.   Claims 2-15 depend from claim 1, claims 17-21 are depended

from claim 16, and claims 23-33 are depended from claim 22.   All

these dependent claims are patentable for at least the same

reasons as the independent claim from which they depend.   The

Applicant therefore respectfully requests reconsideration and

allowance of claims 2-15, 17-21, and 23-33 as well.

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The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney to discuss any matter that would expedite allowance of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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